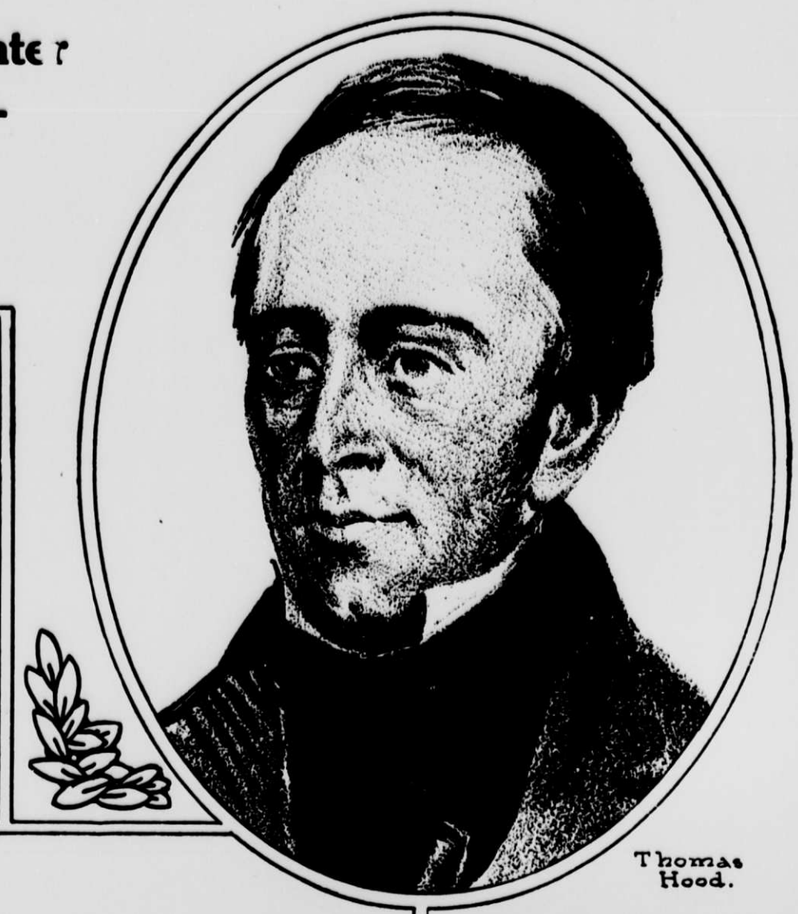
A COLLECTOR'S RAMBLE IN AUTOGRAPH LAND

Late Adrian H. Joline, Enthusiastic Hunter of Famous Signatures, Tells Charming Story of Collection Which Was His Hobby

William Makepeace Thackeray



Thomas Hood.

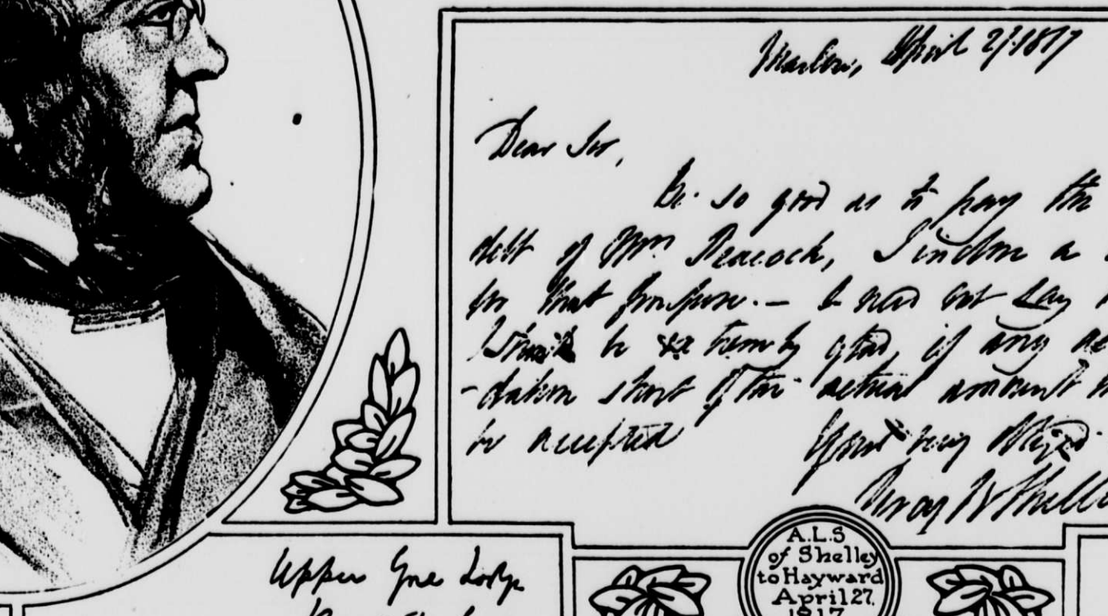
By JEANNETTE L. GILDER.

A BOOK that has timely and, I might add, a pathetic interest is "Rambles in Autograph Land," by Adrian H. Joline (Putnam). The book is just published and Mr. Joline's autograph collection, about which he has written with such appreciation and affection, will soon come under the hammer. Mr. Joline died before the book was published and it has been put through the press by Mr. Van Tassel Sutphen and Mrs. Joline, who was always a sharer in her husband's literary confidences.

Mr. Joline's collection is estimated at anywhere between $25,000 and $75,000. It may have cost him $25,000 to collect it and it may earn for his estate $75,000 when sold. If he bought wisely, as well as enthusiastically, the collection ought to be worth much more than he paid for it, for autographs of the great are getting rarer and rarer every year.

Mr. Joline had a charming and intimate literary style. He forgot that he was learned in the law, that the books to which he gave the most study were of the driest and most serious nature, when he took up the pen to write on his hobby. What he has written shows the evidence of wide reading and a retentive memory, for he interlards his own writings with the thoughts and anecdotes of writers the world over.

At the beginning of this book Mr. Joline tells us that it will never be a "best seller," as books of this sort are talked about but seldom read. He quotes "the accomplished manager of a famous publishing house in New York" as telling him that his writings probably had little commercial value, and he did not find himself prepared to dispute the statement coming from so high an authority, but it gave him some consolation to reflect upon the "commercial value" of certain dreadful things that



First Page of A.L.S (3 Pages) of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, to Bayard Taylor, March 19, 1866.

A.L.S of Shelley to Hayward, April 27, 1817

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Adrian H. Joline

Portion of Original MS. of "Oscar of Alva," by George Gordon, Lord Byron

Nights in Paris, London and Monte Carlo

Continued from Tenth Page.

into acceptance. As yet London has seen only fragments of Russian ballet. But London may and probably will see the whole.

You have a certain complacency in entering it, because it is one of the twenty monster restaurants of London. The name glitters in the public mind. "Where shall we dine? The name suggests itself; by the immense force of its notoriety it comes unsought into the conversation like a thing alive. "All right! Meet you in the Lounge at 7:45." You feel—whatever your superficial airs—that you are in the whirl of correctness as you hurry (of course late) out of a taxi into the Lounge. There is something about the word "Lounge" Space and freedom in the Lounge, and a foretaste of luxury, and it is inhabited by the haughty of the earth! You are not yet a prisoner, in the Lounge. Then an official, with the metallic insignia of authority, takes you apart. He is very deferential, but with the intimidating deference of a limited company that pays 40 per cent. You can go up stairs, though he doubts if there is immediately a table, or you can go down stairs. (Strange, how in the West End, when once you quit the street you must always go up or down; the planet's surface is forbidden to you; you lose touch with it; the ground landlord has taken it and hidden it.) You go down stairs; you are hypnotized into going down stairs, and you go down, and down, one of a procession, until a man, intrenched in a recess furnished to look like a ready made tailor's, accepts half your clothing and adds it to his stock. He does not ask for it; he need not; you are hypnotized. Stripped, you go further down and down. You are now part of the tremendous organism; you have left behind not merely your clothing but your volition; your number is in your hand.

Suddenly, as you pass through a doorway, great irregular vistas of a subterranean chamber discover themselves to you, limitless. You perceive that this wondrous restaurant ramifies under all London and that a table on one verge is beneath St Paul's Cathedral and a table on the other verge beneath the Albert Memorial All the tables—all the thousands of tables—are occupied. An official comes to you and, putting his mouth to your ear (for the din is terrific), tells you that he will have a table for you in three minutes You wait, forlorn. It reminds you of waiting at the barber's for a shave except that the barber gives you an easy chair and a newspaper. Here you must stand and you must gather your skirts about you and stand firm to resist the shock of blind waiters. Others are in your case; others have been waiting longer than you, and at every moment more arrive. You wait. The diners see you waiting, and you wonder whether they are eating slowly on purpose. * * * At length you are led away—far, far from the pit's mouth into a remote working of the mine. You watch a man whisk away foul plates and glasses and cover offence with a pure white cloth. You sit. You are saved! And human nature is such that you feel positively grateful to the limited company. * * *

Monte Carlo—the initiated call it merely "Monte"—has often been described, in fiction and out of it, but the frank confession of a ruined gambler is a rare thing, partly because the ruined gambler can't often write well enough to express himself accurately, partly because he isn't in the mood for literary composition and partly because he is sometimes dead. So, since I am not dead, and since it is only by means of literary composition that I can hope to restore my shattered fortunes, I will give you the frank confession of a ruined gambler. Before I went to Monte Carlo I had all the usual ideas of the average sensible man about gambling in general and about Monte Carlo in particular. "Where does all the exterior brilliance of Monte Carlo come from?" I asked sagely. And I said further: "The Casino administration does not disguise the fact that it makes a profit of about 50,000 francs a day. Where does that profit come from?" And I answered my own question with wonderful wisdom: "Out of the pockets of the foolish gamblers." I specially despised the gambler who gambles "on a system"; I despised him as a creature of superstition. * * *

Of course I went to study human nature and find material. The sole advantage of being a novelist is that when you are discovered in a place where, as a serious person, you would prefer not to be discovered you can always aver that you are studying human nature and seeking material. I was much impressed by the fact of my being in Monte Carlo. I said to myself "I am actually in Monte Carlo." I was proud. And when I got into the gorgeous gaming saloons amid that throng at once glittering and shabby I said: "I am actually in the gaming saloons!" And the thought at the back of my mind was: "Henceforth I shall be able to say that I have been in the gaming saloons at Monte Carlo." After studying human nature at large I began to study it at a roulette table. I had gambled before—notably with impassive Arab chiefs in that singular oasis of the Sahara desert, Biskra—but only a little and always at pettis chevaux. But I understood roulette and I knew several "systems." I found the human nature very interesting; also the roulette. The sight of real gold, silver and notes flung about in heaps warmed my imagination. At this point I felt a solitary five franc piece in my pocket. And then the red turned up three times running and I remembered a simple "system" that began after a sequence of three.

I don't know how it was, but long before I had formally decided to gamble I knew by instinct that I should stake that five franc piece. I fought against the idea, but I couldn't take my hand empty out of my pocket. Then at last (the whole experience occupying perhaps ten seconds) I drew forth the five franc piece and bashfully put it on black. I thought that all the fifty or sixty persons crowded round the table were staring at me and thinking to themselves: "There's a beginner!" However, black won and the croupier pushed another five franc piece alongside of mine and I picked them both up very smartly, remembering all the tales I had ever heard of thieves leaning over you at Monte Carlo and snatching your ill-gotten gains. I then thought: "This a bit of luck all right. Just for fun I'll continue the system." I did so. In an hour I had made 50 francs without breaking into gold. Once a croupier made a slip and was raking in red stakes when red had won and people hesitated (because croupiers never make mistakes, you know, and you have to be careful how you quarrel with the table at Monte Carlo), and I was the first to give vent to a protest, and the croupier looked at me and smiled and apologized, and the winners looked at me gratefully and I began to think myself the deuce and all of a Monte Carlo habitue.

Having made 50 francs I decided that I would prove my self-control by ceasing to play. So I did prove it and went to have tea in the Casino cafe. In those moments 50 francs seemed to me to be a really enormous sum. I was as happy as though I had shot a reviewer without being found out. I gradually began to perceive, too, that though no rational creature could suppose that a spin could be affected by previous spins, nevertheless it undoubtedly was so affected. I began to scorn a little the average sensible man who scorned the gambler. "There is more in roulette than is dreamt of in your philosophy, my conceited friend," I murmured. I was like a woman—I couldn't argue, but I knew infallibly. Then it suddenly occurred to me that if I had gambled with louis instead of five franc pieces I should have made 200 francs —200 francs in rather over an hour! Oh, luxury! Oh, being in the swim! Oh, smartness! Oh, gilded and delicious sin!

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appear in print, and he concluded that after all "such an assurance is not so devoid of flattery as it might seem to be at first blush."

The mere collecting of autographs did not appeal to Mr. Joline. He only cared for those in which he was interested or that concerned certain characteristics of their writers. A mere signature would have to be very rare indeed to be worthy of his collection. Unlike many collectors Mr. Joline seldom kept any record of what a letter or a manuscript cost him and had no idea what it would "fetch" at the auction sale, "which," he writes, "will concern my executors far more than it will ever concern me." It is probably concerning his executors at the present moment.

Even educated persons know little and care less about autographs. A well known Boston collector told Mr. Joline of an accomplished lady, who said to him that she "wanted so much to look on his book of autographs." As a matter of fact he had 165 volumes of them. She thought that he had a single album. Mr. Joline gives the following as a personal experience:

"Some months ago a clever and manifestly intelligent young man representing one of our leading journals called upon me for the declared purpose of finding out which one of my autographs was my particular favorite, the newspaper readers of the metropolis having, no doubt, an inexplicable yearning for that important bit of information.

"'That is a difficult question to answer,' I timidly ventured to say. 'If you want to know which one I longest sought, which one gave me the most anxiety and perturbation of spirit, the most troublesome in the procuring, which one caused the greatest diminution in the amount of my bank balance —I will tell you, but in all probability you will not be able to tell me who the man was. It was the autograph of Button Gwinnett.' His countenance assumed a blank expression as he said, 'I never heard of him.'

"To the collector it brought back the old story of the man on the railway train who insisted upon talking to a surly and uncommunicative stranger about Grant when that distinguished soldier was occupying the White House. 'Grant! Who's Grant?' growled the stranger. 'Why, the President.' 'President of what?' 'President of the United States.' 'Oh.'

"Yet why should the juvenile reporter, a young man of the present, know anything of Button Gwinnett? It was almost an accident that he signed the Declaration of Independence; and in less than a year afterward he fell a victim to the pistol of his fellow Georgian, Lachlan McIntosh. It seems very strange nevertheless that in his forty-five years of life he left so few written evidences of his existence. He was a merchant in Bristol, England, and was engaged in business in Savannah. He filled several important official positions. Yet there is no holograph letter of his in existence, so far as I know."

There is nothing about which there is less intelligence displayed than about the collecting of autographs, and I could have told Mr. Joline an anecdote on this subject which would have pleased him: A number of years ago a lady of my acquaintance who wrote some pretty verses for the magazines saw in an autograph dealer's catalogue the sum of 50 cents marked against her signature. She was filled with delight, for here was an easy way of making money. Immediately she visited the dealer's shop and told him that she saw that her autograph was valued at 50 cents.

"I am quite willing," she announced, "to write as many signatures as you like at the rate of 50 cents. If you will give me a pen and paper I will begin at once."

The dealer, astonished, tried to explain the situation to her, but she would have none of it, but producing his catalogue from her handbag thrust the damning evidence before his eyes. No explanation sufficed and she left his shop believing that he wanted to cheat her of her rights.

On the subject of the overvaluation of autographs by the inexperienced Mr. Joline writes:

"I heard lately of a Boston lady who had a letter of Oliver Wendell Holmes—the Autocrat, not the Judge—for which she wanted the modest sum of $300! In the majority of such cases of amusing overvaluation the parties are acting in entire good faith. But a few weeks ago a lady wrote to me offering to dispose of what she manifestly deemed to be precious relics—a White House card with the signature of Grover Cleveland and another with that of Mrs. Cleveland. To her they were worth a great deal, and I scarcely had the heart to tell her that they would be dear at a dollar apiece; in fact, it would be almost extravagant to pay that much for them."

Mr. Joline says that an autograph collector should be a man of a contented mind. 'He does not believe that a discontented man could ever make a good collector. He adds: "Almost every one now seems to be discontented about something." On this subject he writes amusingly.

"I think it is creditable to the tribe that no autograph collector, as far as I can remember, ever effected an alleged 'reform' or headed a sanguinary revolution. The collector is a peaceful, contemplative person, as one must be who studies his letters and manuscripts and reflects upon all the toil, strife and struggles of the men who wrote the pages over which he pores, and upon the futility of most of their strivings. How excited they became over what, if in their present state they take cognizance of mundane things, they must now regard as trivial and insignificant."

Mr. Joline is particularly interesting when he writes about his own collection. Among the most valuable of his autographs are certain poems by Thomas Gray not included in any collection published in his lifetime, but they do appear in the edition of John Mitford.

"The first of the poems was written at Miss Speed's request, to an old air of Geminiani, the thought taken from the French. The version in the Mitford edition is printed from the copy which appeared in Walpole's Letters to the Countess of Allesbury. A different version is given in Park's edition, and neither rendering corresponds exactly with the manuscript. The verses read as follows:

Thyrsis when he left me, swore
E'er the spring he would return.
Ah! what means yon opening flower
And the bird that decks the thorn?
'Twas the lark that upward sprung,
'Twas the nightingale that sung.
Idle notes, untimely green!
Why such unvailing haste?
Gentle gales and skies serene
Prove not always winter past.
Cease my doubts, my fears to move,
Spare the honor of my Love.

Of Byron's autographs there is in this collection a manuscript containing six stanzas of "Oscar of Alva," a poem included in "Hours of Idleness." They are written on both sides of a small quarto sheet and there are many erasures and corrections.

In the last line "Byron wrote 'lie' and not 'die,' and the correction improves the rhyme but not the sense; whether the change was made by the printer or by the author I have no means of deciding. The manuscript is accompanied by a letter from John Murray in which he says: 'It is a genuine autograph and might fetch from two to three guineas at an auction at Sotheby's.' The year of Murray's letter is not given; it evidently proceeded from John Murray the younger, who died in 1892. His estimate of price seems low, when we consider that in 1909, at a New York sale, a manuscript of a Byron poem of sixteen lines—'I saw thee weep'—brought $200. True to my record, I wholly forget what I paid for mine."

From a number of Tom Hood's letters Mr. Joline selects one "written as he was approaching the end of his sad life, for it shows him with a little jest at the end of his pen, struggling under the burdens of ill health and the newly

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Upper Gore Lodge
Kensington Gore
March 19/1866

My dear Sir

Your new book has just arrived in a hamper of provisions sent on here from Farringford, for we have been staying here for some weeks in a house formerly, I believe, belonging to Count D'Orsay and now to Lady Franklin, and we get for the most part supplied from the farm at home. Many thanks for your book, which will I have no doubt increase your reputation, and for your kindly letter. I am sorry that I was not at home to welcome your friend Mr. Norwood. If you intend to honor me with another visit perhaps it will be as well to send me notice a week or so before you come, that I may not miss you. We are generally away on the Continent during July and September. Believe me, my dear sir,

Yours very truly,

A. TENNYSON

The letter from Thackeray in this collection was written to William Harrison Ainsworth and refers to the novelist's lectures on "The Four Georges."

MY DEAR AINSWORTH: You'll think this correspondence is never going to stop—and laugh when I tell you that here's another put off—only from 5 to 6:30, however, and I'll tell you why. Yesterday, after my letter to you was despatched, Mr. Beale came to me for four lectures at Brighton, to be paid for the extremely moderate figure of 50 guineas per lecture (this is between ourselves). The only days we could give them are Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 24th, at 3 o'clock, and I shall have to speak again in the evening here.

Now this is the plan of campaign. We start from Brighton by the 5 o'clock train. My servant is in waiting at the station to take our luggage. My (jobbed) brougham whisks us off to Painters, and Turtle, Leadenhall street, where neat dinner awaits us, a bottle of East India particular and one of claret. At 7:30 the brougham takes us to Edwards street and at 9:25 whither we like, and then home to this house, where at all insist you must stop and sleep.

And so for the present farewell, old friend. Who knows there may be another letter yet? The Brighton room may be engaged, &c., &c. About these matters due notice shall be given, but on Saturday and Sunday, 24-25, please the Lord, you dine with

Yours always,

W. M. THACKERAY

The letters of Dickens were generally written with blue ink on blue paper, rather bad for the eyes. All the manuscripts of his that I have seen and there are a number, were written in this way. I have known American authors who affected the same combination until they realized its foolishness and gave it up. Dickens's letter that Mr. Joline gives in his collection is too long to quote. It is to one of his old school friends, Thomas Mitton, about a railway accident which occurred at Staplehurst.

There are letters of Poe, Longfellow, Mark Twain and other American writers, but they are not particularly important or significant, though most interesting, particularly those of Longfellow, Holmes and Lowell.

Mr. Joline has made a delightful book and I am sorry that he did not live to read it.

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founded *Hood's Magazine*." It is written to F. O. Ward, his sub-editor.

MY DEAR WARD: I continue better and the wind has changed and I have had my window open. The sycamore is no longer emetical. What a day for Ascot!—without any Running Rein!

You haven't sent the Fraser. I will look over Wolesby's list more carefully in the morning. Most of them it appears are very stale—e. g. Life of Louis Phillippe—a poor book. I have had it these nine months. Slick the attache is old too. Howitt's German book I should like to do myself. Swiss Life of Elton ought to be a good book, but it is not ready I suspect. I hope Wolesby is not strong Tory. Our actresses I dare say will be sent by Smith & Elder when ready.

I have done three cuts on the wood today and shall send them per boy tomorrow to the wood cutter. Perhaps with some more.

It is funny Wolesby talking of "novelties" with such a list of stale books. Please not to write to Broderip—per item.

If Cooper's Ashore and Afloat is new it might do. But I do not see why we should turn Retrospective Reviewers and go back to old wares. My notion is reviews of novelties with good extracts—for our readers before they can generally get the books through circulating libraries. I will send George to-morrow for the Fraser.

Dr. Toulmin's verses are weak and come to "a bad end." They certainly will not do. The Mag. has a poetical reputation we must not undermine. A little and good. I am certain that readers are more disgusted by indifferent poetry than by bad prose.

Yours affectionately,

T. HOOD.

There is a letter written by Tennyson to Bayard Taylor, the poet, which shows that the Laureate felt disposed toward at least one American.

UPPER GORE LODGE,
KENNINGTON GORE,
March 19, 1866.

MY DEAR SIR: Your new book has just arrived in a hamper of provisions sent on here from Farringford, for we have been staying here for some weeks in a house formerly, I believe, belonging to Count D'Orsay and now to Lady Franklin, and we get for the most part supplied from the farm at home. Many thanks for your book, which will I have no doubt increase your reputation, and for your kindly letter. I am sorry that I was not at home to welcome your friend Mr. Norwood. If you intend to honor me with another visit perhaps it will be as well to send me notice a week or so before you come, that I may not miss you. We are generally away on the Continent during July and September. Believe me, my dear sir,

Yours very truly,

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